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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Christian Conference of Asia
CCA
an organ and fellowship of churches and ecumenical councils in asia for initiating and facilitating dynamic christian witness and action

Asian youth commit to "break every yoke" and rise as agents of transformation

The Fifth Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA 2026), was held at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 17 to 21 April 2026.

More than two hundred Christian youth from Asia and beyond echoed a unified call to "break every yoke" and affirmed their commitment to confronting interconnected injustices, embodying a liberating faith, embracing the "yoke of Christ", and acting together as agents of transformation.

After five days of listening, sharing, and critical engagement on pressing issues affecting young people across Asia, participants adopted a communiqué on the final day, affirming their faith and commitment to become agents of change in communities and societies.

Grounded in a shared theological conviction, the communiqué affirmed faith as inherently liberating and inseparable from action. **Drawing on biblical witness,**

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Build momentum for a "just transition" from fossil fuels

Ecumenical consultation explores collaboration and responsibility in action

A High-Level Strategic Consultation on *Ecumenical Cooperation* held at the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey on 29 and 30 April, created a space for honest, forward-looking dialogue among senior leaders of the World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, ACT Alliance, and the leadership of ecumenical specialized ministries.

The consultation aimed to discern together strategic priorities, expectations, and responsibilities for ecumenical cooperation, collaboration , and to explore the distinctive value, strategic added value and transformative potential of ecumenical cooperation among those committed to ecumenical witness and action.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, stated at the beginning, "Our coming together is not merely institutional – it is profoundly theological, missional, and urgent in the light of the world we are called to serve." He called for moving from cooperation to intentional and integral collaboration. "One of the pressing challenges we face is fragmentation of voice, of resources, and at times, of strategy," he said.

"The credibility of our witness depends on coherence, and collaboration," Dr. Pillay said. "Coherence and collaboration between theological reflection and humanitarian action; between advocacy at the global level and accompaniment at the grassroots level; between institutional structures and the lived realities of churches and communities."

"This does not require uniformity, but it does require intentional alignment," Dr. Pillay said. "I believe we are living in a *kairos* moment. The call before us is not institutional survival but faithful discipleship in a wounded world. May we have the courage not only to collaborate, but to be transformed by collaboration."

Rev. Dr. Anne Burghardt, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, spoke about a global context that requires a global response. "What is clear is that power centers are shifting and the global situation may look very different depending on from where you look at it and which values you hold. Several actors have the feeling that they have not been invited to the table. We must also take a very clear stance against any instrumentalization of Christianity, particularly when Christianity is used to promote disregard for human dignity." Dr. Anne said.

Morning prayer of the High-Level Strategic Consultation at the chapel of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey.
Photo: Gregoire de Fombelle/WCC

Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, General Secretary of the ACT Alliance, described the consultation as a space for honest and forward-looking dialogue. "Historically, ecumenical cooperation has been very reactive to the political and social dynamics. This meeting is about a visionary strategic conversation at the leadership level", said Rudelmar Bueno de Faria.

On 29 April, reflecting *on 2 Corinthians 1:1–6* Rev. Pauliina Parhiala, Executive Director of Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, said, "It is hope that arises from remembering that God has already met us where things are hard—and has not abandoned us. We are justified not because our situation looks promising, but because God remains faithful. The future is not secured by our capacity, but by God's promise."

– WCC News

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Pope's bold stand against the war in Iran

Pope Leo's bold stand against the ongoing war by the US and Israel against Iran marks a break to the Western history, generally known for the absence of conflicts between the Church and the State. This is the first time in the modern era that the President of the most powerful Christian-majority State got into a public war of words with the Pontiff. In the second week of April, while presiding over the Peace meeting in Cameron, Pope Leo XIV blasted the "handful of tyrants" who are ravaging earth with war and exploitation; and warned against allowing religion to enter conflicts.

Reacting to this, Mr. Trump declared in his social media platform that he did not "want a Pope who would criticize the President". Further, he called the Pope "weak on crime", "weak on nuclear weapons", and "terrible for foreign policy". He also claimed the credit of elevation of the American cleric as the Pope, and urged the Pope to "get his acts together as Pope, use Common Sense to stop catering to the Radical Left, and focus on being a Great Pope, not a politician". He also posted an Al-generated image of himself as a Christ-like figure helping the sick, framed by American flags, signalling his theological intent. The trigger for the image was a prayer vigil that Pope Leo held at St.Peter's Basilica, the previous evening, denouncing the 'delusion of omnipotence' and calling Mr. Trump's threat to destroy an entire civilization as "truly unacceptable". The Vatican has also declined President Trump's invitation to celebrate the US's 250th anniversary of Independence on 14 July.

Mr. Trump became furious against the Pope because he was seeking to dress up this war as a quasi-religious mission of Christian righteousness – a so called "just war". The secretary of war Peter Hegseth started evangelical worship services at the Pentagon. On 25 March, he prayed with confidence in "the mighty and powerful name of Jesus Christ" for "overwhelming violence of action against those who deserve no mercy". There was a concerted effort to portray the assault on Iran as a 'holy war' against "God's enemies". Pope, the spiritual leader of 1.4 billion Catholics could not remain silent in this situation. On 1 March, Day 2 of the war, Pope warned of a "tragedy of enormous proportions". As the war escalated, he condemned the war outright. On April 11, during the prayer vigil, Pope spoke out explicitly against religious justification for the Iran war and said, "God does not bless those who drop bombs". Pope said, "The war is not merely a political or foreign policy issue, but fundamentally a moral issue". He also pointed out that the 'just war' doctrine had a long history of being abused by military aggressors.

Pope Leo sees the present moment especially after the Gaza genocide, as a dangerous moral void that obliges him to speak up for the value of human life. Some analysts point out that it is also possible, he views it as an opportunity to restore the Catholic Church's moral authority, which has suffered serious erosion in recent decades over clerical sex abuse scandals. Pope Leo clearly said that in a world "being ravaged by a handful of tyrants", "peace is everyone's responsibility"; and "woe to those who manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic and political gain, dragging that which is sacred into darkness."

Thought for the Fortnight

"Humanity should question itself, once more, about the absurd and always unfair phenomenon war."

– Pope John Paul II

The Role of Science in Protecting the Creation in God's Way

Solomon Victus

We need to make this universe not only ecologically inhabitable to all the creatures but also a cohesive community. Bp. Sam Amirtham wrote, 'It will be a garden of communion and harmony within humanity itself, between humanity and nature with itself... When the wolves and lions of this world learn to drink "*kanji*" (gruel) with the rural poor of our villages, then there will be some hope of the establishment of this "Shalom Garden on earth!"'

[Third and concluding part of the paper 'The Role of Science in Protecting the Creation in God's Way'.]

Striking Contradictions:

The vast majority of Christian believers have not yet affirmed the importance of transforming this world as well as the political-economy of the earth, but are keen on transferring everything to heaven which means to me a mere escapism. Whereas the so-called non-believers such as atheists and humanists in fact do believe only in the transformation of the world or the earth, as well as being seriously concerned about qualitative life before death.

Among Christians, two types of people essentially retain belief in God for their life situations – the first type is the despised who are disappointed over egotistic human behaviour and expect God's intervention in extraordinary ways; and the second type makes religion and God to serve their 'blessing' mission and prosperity, to enjoy the benefits of the hierarchy and statusquo and to accumulate wealth for furthering their profit, which is a pure business model. But from the perspective of agnostics and atheists, it is alleged that the right-wing religious people have been using God for their own lives **in hypocritical and irrational ways. In reality, the problem lies not with God but with the believers who understand and practise God.** That was the reason why Karl Marx maintained that the religiosity of the people was something that had been manipulated systematically in a class society. Therefore, they consider that the 'pie in the sky' and 'life after death' approach is totally against rationalism, and that was the reason why Marx was highly critical about the role of religion; he understood that 'Religious distress is at the same

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time the expression of real distress and protest against distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people."[5] Among all other creations, human leadership with the 'image of God' qualification could only be acceptable only if they would choose affirmation of life and intergenerational justice.

What are the God's ways in a rational perception?

How do we discern God's ways in a world of paradoxes and mysteries? Does God come under the category of rationality? How do we understand the will of God in a world of distress and forsakenness? None of these questions can be answered in absolute confidence without knowing the text and the context of the scripture. It is tangible always to understand and interpret the power of God as well as the power of nature only in relative terms. Therefore we need to have a scientific or materialistic or existential interpretation of the text as it required today in a context of religious intolerance as well as scientific ignorance.

'Satan', in the Bible, in general means whoever is anti-life and anti-Christ. In other words, God is the short form of 'goodness' whereas the devil is the short form of 'evilness'. The left leaning believers understand categorically that our biblical God is the one who always sides with the abundance of life to all creatures rather than the exclusive abundance of wealth and prosperity to the humans; in this understanding we are in any case no way different from other religious believers. **Ecological concern in Christianity essentially means siding with pro-life and the sustainability of all humans and creatures. Insensitiveness among Christians to the eco-crises that we face today is a warning sign that we are siding with death and destruction; is it not something that sounds like an anti-biotic to our own life?**

For any rational believer, God is not a magician but rather God entrusts humans to transform themselves towards a state of abundance of life with justice and peace. For them, the Biblical God is manifested in such a way that the Almighty is the one who gives one hundred percent freedom, and trusts human beings for God's will on earth. Here prevails the existential paradox that God is handicapped without human cooperation. Disobedience and transgression happen only among humans, not in the rest of the creation, whereas the rest of the other creatures respond sentimentally according to the inputs and environmental atmosphere available. Humans are relatively the only rational yet rebellious and disobedient beings in nature. An old expression of the Jews jokingly says, "Where you find two Jews, you will find three opinions."[6] This is the common human predicament. Humans can easily go against nature or God, bluntly refusing the blessing bestowed on them to enjoy. For me, happiness and joy lie in our human hands, and to attain this we need a different social structure, theology and state of mind. While

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Intergenerational Solidarity:

Towards Celebrating the Aged

Nimshi David

II Samuel 19:31-40

Robert N. Butler, a gerontologist, says "The discrimination against old people is similar to actions and attitudes present in racism and sexism." Theo-gerontology which focuses on ageing, fosters intergenerational solidarity which creates an inclusive community with the elderly and promotes dignified ageing.

The passage *2 Samuel 19 : 31-40* narrates the conversation between Barzillai, an eighty-year-old man and David who is around 62 years. Both are part of different generations with different attitudes and experiences. Yet, they are mutually dependent paving the way for Intergenerational Solidarity. The Hebrew word *"avar,"* used seven times in this passage to denote the physical travel of David, Barzillai and Chimham, also signifies their life transitions. David was returning to his kingship, Barzillai was getting ready to face his death, and Chimham was joining the court profession. All these life-transitions occurring across three different generations, foster intergenerational solidarity.

1. Solidarity through active involvement (v.31-v.33)

The name Barzillai means 'strong iron'. He hailed from Rogelim, a place in Gilead. This place was known for producing thick, freshly woven clothes, implying that he was wealthy. The Hebrew phrase *"ishgadol"* in v.32 though conveys Barzillai's wealth also brings out his greatness in action and kindness. Barzillai selflessly, risking his own life, provided provisions for David and his troops as they fled to Mahanaim when David's son Absalom caused internal political threat. (2 Samuel 17:24-29). He did this act with much involvement. Which is understood through the Piel form of the verb*"kul"*- had provided (v.32) denoting the intensity of Barzillai's action. **Barzillai's active involvement was not for publicity nor with any expectation. Thus, this very aged man, Barzillai, became a hope-giver to David of another generation by taking part in David's crisis.**

Barzillai did not disappear after the first meeting. When David and his troops returned to Jerusalem after Absalom's death, they met Barzillai in Jordan. In the second meeting Barzillai came down from Rogelim (v.31). Despite his age and physical difficulties, Barzillai came down, It demonstrates his kindness, humility, loyalty and bold public support for David's kingship.

The church must create a space for the aged to share their life experiences by bringing collaboration of the elderly, children and youth fellowships. Retreats for the aged and being open-minded to the elderly pastors and elderly congregations foster intergenerational solidarity. Where there is intergenerational solidarity the aged are celebrated every day.

David would not have expected such a solidarity initiative from Barzillai. In return, David offered to care for Barzillai for the rest of his life in Jerusalem in v.33. The same vocabulary "*kul*" in the Piel form is used here, as it was used to denote the intensive act of Barzillai. David intended to make Barzillai his permanent guest and to provide him all the resources he had.

Barzillai's active involvement challenges the stereotypes about the aged, that elderly people are worthless and inactive. Barzillai remarks ageing is an asset and age is not a barrier to service by his active involvement in intergenerational solidarity here. Thus, aged people also become the pillars of our society and make humanity whole.

2. Solidarity through respectful recognition (v. 34- v.37a)

When David placed the royal invitation, Barzillai declined it. Why? He declined because of his limited span of life and physical limitations of loss of vision, taste and hearing, indicating his disinterest and difficulty in court life. He claimed himself not to be a burden to David. The Hebrew phrase *"owdlemassa"* in v.35 meaning added burden also carries a significant note on Barzillai's concern. He prioritized the concern of caretakers in David's court over his own. The Hebrew word *"masah"* used here

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for burden also brings out the meaning tribute when used in connection with v. 36 – why should the king recompense me with such a reward? **It presents that he neither wanted to be a burden nor to be praised as a tribute but only to be recognized or accepted as he is. His request was only for a dignified death in his own city (37 a). This is the common view of most of the aged people to spend their last days conveniently in their own place rather than being displaced.**

Barzillai's refusals were conveyed wisely providing space for David's realization. As the proverb, *'Silence means consent'.* David's silence throughout the responses of Barzillai, was the symbol of recognizing Barzillai's refusal. Barzillai's refusal was not treated as disobedience nor led to David's anger or disappointment. Though knowing Barzillai's worth in the counsel, David did not force him nor his contribution was taken for granted. **David's recognition or acceptance shows his respect for the views of the elderly.**

Intergenerational solidarity is not just through help and reversal support but also through accepting or recognizing the elders as they are. Failing to understand and respect their contributions results in the exploitation and dehumanization of the aged. This builds the generation gap and does not bridge the intergenerational solidarity.

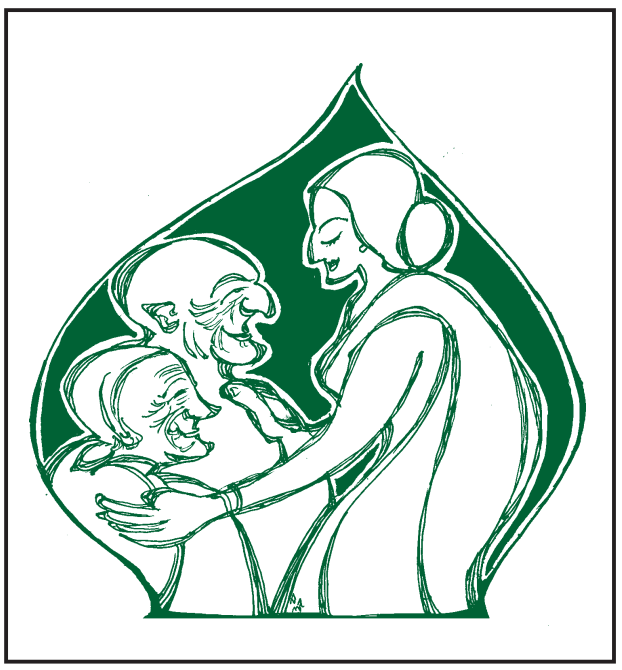
3. Solidarity through wise delegation (v.37b -v.40)

The aged Barzillai did not forsake David. He went a little way in Jordan and gave David send-off. Barzillai also brought an alternate practical solution. He gave his son Chimham on his behalf to David. (V.37.) We may doubt whether Chimham was his son? If so did Barzillai practice nepotism? However, there is no direct mention of Chimham as Barzillai's son except in Septuagint and Peshitta. Biblical historians identify him as Barzillai's son on account of David's deathbed request to be faithful to Barzillai's sons, and the place Geruth Chimham named after Chimham meaning the hospitality of Chimham. Barzillai gave his intensely desired son to David. As, the name Chimham means 'their longing.' **Hence, it should not be devalued here as nepotism but as a delegation of responsibility to the younger generation. He elevated his son's life and also ensured continual support and care for David. David fled from Jerusalem because of his son Absalom and lost his son. Now, he enters into Jerusalem with a new renewed relationship with Chimham. The solidarity of David and Chimham was established by the wise delegation made by the aged man Barzillai.**

David accepted this wise proposal and promised to do favour for Chimham according to Barzillai's desire. The Hebrew word used in v.38 for you are desire is *"bachar."* It also means to request. For this context, the second meaning request, denoting the request of Barzillai, is more applicable. Seeing this in connection to the earlier requests made by Barzillai shows here David's acceptance and respect in words. The climax of David's acceptance, recognition and his solidarity with Barzillai is expressed through the blessing and kiss by David in Jordan in v. 39. Blessing and kiss in ancient Israel, were common practices that signified hospitality, bidding farewell, friendship, respect and acceptance. Further Chimham went on to Gilgal with David. David whose recognition or acceptance and respect were earlier in silence, then in words, is now here expressed in action. **David's acceptance here shows his obedience to the aged wisdom.**

In the context where elders are neglected or taken for granted, we have a larger role to play in bridging intergenerational solidarity and celebrating the aged. **Let us realize that more than charity, dignity to live is important for the aged. This becomes the better way to celebrate the aged. Let us challenge the negative notion of ageing as not knowledgeable, non-energetic or not useful. Let us acknowledge and celebrate their contributions and their wisdom to church and society.**

In the context where elders are neglected or taken for granted, we have a larger role to play in bridging intergenerational solidarity and celebrating the aged. Let us realize that more than charity, dignity to live is important for the aged. This becomes the better way to celebrate the aged. Let us challenge the negative notion of ageing as not knowledgeable, non-energetic or not useful. Let us acknowledge and celebrate their contributions and their wisdom to church and society.



The church must create a space for the aged to share their life experiences by bringing collaboration of the elderly, children and youth fellowships. Retreats for the aged and being open-minded to the elderly pastors and elderly congregations foster intergenerational solidarity. Where there is intergenerational solidarity the aged are celebrated every day.

Climate and Biodiversity - 4

Why Saving Elephants Is Saving the Planet?

Mathew Koshy

We often admire elephants as symbols of strength, wisdom, and the grandeur of the wild. Yet, beyond their physical majesty lies a deeper ecological truth — the survival of elephants is intimately connected with the survival of our planet.

A landmark international study involving researchers from UNICAMP (University of Campinas) and EMBRAPA (Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation) highlights a remarkable reality: the African forest elephant is not merely a resident of the jungle, but a powerful force in sustaining the Earth's climate. To protect elephants is, in a real sense, to protect the very lungs of our planet.

The Journey That Plants Forests

Elephants are constantly on the move. In the wild, they travel **10 to 25 kilometres daily**, and during migration or dry seasons, they may cover **up to 40–50 kilometres**. This movement is not random — it is ecological work in action.

As elephants feed on fruits, they consume seeds that are too large to be dispersed by winds or smaller animals. These seeds pass through their digestive system and are deposited far from the parent tree in nutrient-rich dung. What appears to be waste becomes a cradle of life, offering ideal conditions for germination.

Through this process, elephants act as **"mega-gardeners" of the forest**, helping spread large-seeded trees. These trees are among the most efficient at storing carbon. Without elephants, such species fail to regenerate, and over time, the forest begins to lose its capacity to sustain itself.

Elephants show behaviours that reflect empathy and care: they comfort distressed members, assist the injured, protect their young, and even grieve their dead. Science describes these behaviours as empathy, altruism, and social intelligence. Yet, they also remind us that values such as care and compassion are not confined to human life — they are part of the fabric of creation.

Guided by Senses and Memory

The elephant's movement is guided by extraordinary abilities. It possesses one of the most powerful olfactory systems among land animals, enabling it to detect water, vegetation, and subtle environmental changes over long distances. Alongside this, elephants — especially the matriarchs — have remarkable memory, remembering ancient water routes and seasonal patterns.

Their journey is therefore not just physical; it is guided by **deep ecological knowledge passed across generations**. They do not merely walk through the forest — they understand it.

Architects of Climate Stability

Elephants play a critical role in shaping forest ecosystems. By trampling smaller plants and thinning undergrowth, they reduce competition, allowing large, slow-growing trees to thrive. These trees, with dense wood, store significantly more carbon.

Scientific studies warn that the extinction of forest elephants could result in a 6–9% reduction in forest carbon storage. In the context of global climate change, this is not a minor loss—it is a serious weakening of the Earth's natural defence system.

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When the Forest Forgets

In ecosystems like the Congo Basin, elephants create clearings, dig for water, and enrich the soil, supporting countless species. However, when elephants disappear, a slow transformation begins. Large carbon-rich trees decline. Smaller, less stable vegetation takes over. The forest gradually loses its ability to regulate climate and sustain biodiversity. The forest does not collapse immediately. **It slowly forgets how to renew itself.**

The Social Heart of the Elephant

Beyond their ecological role, elephants reveal a deeper dimension of life—**relational intelligence**.They live in matriarchal families, where bonds between members are strong and enduring. Calves are cared for not only by their mothers but also by other females in the herd. **Elephants show behaviours that reflect empathy and care: they comfort distressed members, assist the injured, protect their young, and even grieve their dead. Science describes these behaviours as empathy, altruism, and social intelligence. Yet, they also remind us that values such as care and compassion are not confined to human life — they are part of the fabric of creation.**

A Story of Memory and Relationship

The depth of elephant intelligence and relational life is beautifully illustrated in the story of Lawrence Anthony, known as the "elephant whisperer." Anthony rescued a herd of elephants that had been marked for destruction and patiently built a relationship of trust with them. When he passed away in 2012, something extraordinary occurred. Two elephant herds, travelling from distant areas, arrived at his home. They stood silently near his house for two days — without disturbance, without searching for food — and then quietly left. Science may interpret this behaviour in terms of memory or sensory awareness. Yet, the event invites deeper reflection. It reveals that elephants are not only ecological agents but also beings capable of memory, relationship, and what appears to us as reverence.

A Strategy for Survival

The elephant does not carry tools, yet it builds forests. It does not speak of sustainability, yet its life embodies it.

By protecting elephants, we safeguard:

- **Carbon storage systems**
- **Water cycles**
- **Biodiversity**
- **Climate stability**

But beyond these measurable benefits, elephants remind us of a deeper truth: **Life on Earth is sustained not only by systems, but by relationships.**

Conclusion

With every step,
the elephant sows life.

When it disappears, the forest does not collapse — it slowly forgets how to live.

Elephants are rare beings. Saving elephants is not an act of charity. It is a necessity for planetary survival — and a call to rediscover our place within the living web of creation.

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The Role of Science in Protecting the Creation in God's Way

>>> Contd. from Page 2 Col. 4

trusting human potentiality to transform the world we need to reaffirm that God is no more an omnipotent, omniscient being superficially, but God lives through every individual initiative and nature towards the transformation. God is totally dependent upon human cooperation. This is the reason why the Biblical God places choices in front of us – to choose life (Deut.30:15-20; Jos. 24:14-15). Thus human choice is between becoming Divine and Satan.

Conclusion:

Our progressive Christian task today must be a qualitative dignified life before death despite our belief in eschatology, etc., and we are obliged to respect the power of nature on earth. This is an inescapable reality. For instance, while believing in God we are taking medicine for a sickness along with diet control; while having strong faith in God we also lock our home while we go out. **Humility to accept the laws of nature is more important for a genuine believer. Moreover progressive Christians always need secular allies rather than Christian right-wing thinkers to sustain their belief in social transformation.**

Ecological concern in Christianity essentially means siding with pro-life and the sustainability of all humans and creatures. Insensitiveness among Christians to the eco-crises that we face today, is a warning sign that we are siding with death and destruction; is it not something that sounds like an anti-biotic to our own life?

What is the necessity of having strong solidarity among all secularists, including Christians, against right wing ideologists? Christian secularists need to understand that history shows that right-wing religious ideologues are more dangerous than left-wing atheists. We can rely fully upon the genuine atheists more than on the right-wing religious ideologues. **Dr. Dhyanchand Carr once wrote about the outlook of majority Indian Christians. 'A problem I would like to identify as lying at the base of a strange co-existence between pragmatic atheism and traditional confessionalism is that theology is done entirely from the perspective of the rich and middle class...'**[7] The question remains here: how do we discern a secular spirituality in a context where religious spirituality is predominantly divisive, communal and exclusive? Why does our Christian faith work against the spirituality of atheists and agnostics who never believe in violence but in progressive social transformation and ecological justice in this world?

We need to make this universe not only ecologically inhabitable to all the creatures but also a cohesive community. I would like to end with the words of Bp. Sam Amirtham, 'It will be a garden of communion and harmony within humanity itself, between humanity and nature with itself... When the wolves and lions of this world learn to drink "*kanji*" (gruel) with the rural poor of our villages, then there will be some hope of the establishment of this "Shalom Garden on earth!"'[8]

Footnotes

[5] ***Harvey Cox:*** *'Many Mansions: A Christian Encounter with Other Faiths' (London: Collins, 1988), p.182.*

[6] ***Rabbi Morris N. Kertzer & Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman:*** *'What is a Jew?' New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993, p.28.*

[7] ***Dhyanchand Carr:*** *'A Vision for the Church in India', Bangalore: Ecumenical Christian Centre News, 1992, p.7.*

[8] ***Sam Amirtham:*** *'Gospel to All Creation in the Good News of Jesus Christ in the Indian Setting', ed. by T. Dayanandan Francis, Chennai: CLS, 2000, p.93.*

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An Appreciation Of The Book

' The Earth is the Lord's '

Abraham Philip

[Please see page 8]

**The world is presented as the *oikos* (house) of God.
A tree is a symbol of non-violence. A tree does not scream for attention.
It retains its serenity. It provides handle to a knife and gives shade to a wood cutter till it falls.**

***'The Earth is the Lord's'* is a collection of 25 articles written by the Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph over the past few decades. It has 17 eco-poems as well as meditations also. He was a New Testament student and scholar who had done a lot of research in the field of New Testament under world-renowned authorities in Biblical Studies and has written several books in this area. Moreover, he was teaching New Testament at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam and has guided doctoral research scholars in this field. After completing his term of being the Principal at the Seminary in Kottayam, he moved to Chennai and Bangalore towards the last decade of the last century. After joining the Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC), Bengaluru, he became a full-fledged ecologist.**

His association with the World Council of Churches (WCC) through the Faith and Order Commission and ACISCA (Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia) and his post-doctoral research under SATHRI (South Asia Theological Research in India) in the field of ecology (2006-08) made his shift in focus into the area of ecological studies. **The year 2025 was a great landmark in his life as he could complete six decades of ordained ministry in the Mar Thoma Church as well as complete eight and a half decades in his terrestrial pilgrimage.**

As Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph was not keeping good health recently, he asked me to be the joint editor for his most recent work, and also to write a response on the contents of the book. It is, indeed, commendable that Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph and Mrs. Dr. Elizabeth Joseph are contributing copies of this book to Bengaluru ECC as a gesture of their love and association with it. The memory of Rev. M. A. Thomas, the founder Director of the ECC, and the promotion of ecological concerns are very dear to Rev. M. J. Joseph's heart. Here, I draw attention to some of the very glaring things that attracted my attention when I went through this magnificent work of art.

Ecology is a branch of science that is concerned with the inter-relationship among organisms and their environment and hence, it is all-pervading. We can have materials on the subject not only from the various scriptures of religions, but also from various philosophies, poetry, literature etc that are already there in the world as well as from any popular sayings or thought-patterns anywhere in any Tribal, *Adivasi* or fisher-folk communities. The most oppressed groups of people such as the tribals, fisher-folk are integrally related to the earth. All these sources are made use of tremendously by the author of this book.

The ecological sins such as pollution of air, water, light and sound are presented as symbols of death, and there is the exhortation to modify or transform them into symbols of life. The things that bind the flora and fauna on this planet are to be considered carefully. We have to be thankful for the new day, sun shine, air, river, flowers, fish, birds, cattle and so on. The human responsibility to the created order is highlighted: humans are to be stewards and parents of creation. We have to learn from nature as the heavens manifest the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. The splendor and wonder of creation is ever revealed through each and every object in creation. **According to Paul, "Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made" (Romans 1:20).**

The Rev. Dr. M. J. Joseph is former Professor of New Testament and Principal, Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, Kottayam, Principal, ISET, ECC and Director, Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, Secretary BTESSC, West Bengal; Member Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, Geneva.

Rev. Dr. Abraham Philip is a retired clergyman of the Mar Thoma Church. He is a former Professor at the Mar Thoma Theological Seminary and the MSOT Seminary, Mulanthuruthy. And a former Director of TMAM Orientation Centre, Manganam.

The message of the Kingdom of God preached by Jesus is well-established. The ecumenical (*oikoumene*) vision in the Lord's Prayer provides a great vision for humanity. We are to be committed to live according to the ecological values such as conservation, not consumerism; need, not greed; enabling power, not dominating power; integrity of creation, not exploitation.

The ancients of India's religious tradition have bequeathed to us a living tradition of friendship with nature. No wonder the Seers of Indian cultural tradition wrote the Vedas and Upanishads sitting in the open under the trees. The Indian ideals of *Vasudaivakudumbakam* (the whole world as one family), *Loka Samastha Sukino bhavanthu* (Let the whole world be happy and prosperous) *Sathyam* (Truth), *Shivam* (Order), *Sundaram* (Beauty) keep echoing powerfully.

The world is presented as the *oikos* (house) of God. A tree is a symbol of non-violence. A tree does not scream for attention. It retains its serenity. It provides handle to a knife and gives shade to a wood cutter till it falls. Flora and fauna are in birth pangs due to the rape of the mother earth and our violation of the moral laws in eco-ethics. Defending the earth should be a way of life. A great city is that which handles its art and garbage equally well. Social justice is impossible without justice for the natural environment.

Thomas Aquinas said, "Any misunderstanding about nature leads to a misunderstanding of God". The words of Arundhathi Roy about what will happen in a nuclear war are pictured beautifully. In a nuke war the very elements – the sky, air, land, wind and water (the *panchabhootas)* - will turn against the humans.

The Earth Day celebrated on 22nd April every year should be a reminder to us to act with love and care for the earth. The divine commands of love, grace and peace are fragrant flowers in all seasons of life for the glory of God.

Let me conclude with a thanksgiving prayer by St. Francis of Assisi quoted by the author in the closing eco-friendly inter-religious Worship Order: Be praised, my Lord, for brother wind, and for the air, cloudy and clear and all weather! By which you give sustenance to all creatures; Be praised, my Lord, for our Mother Earth; Who sustains and governs us; and produces fruits with colourful flowers and leaves. ●

The 1950 Presidential Order: Origins, Religious Restriction, and the Continuing Crisis of Dalit Christian Exclusion

>>> Contd. from Page 6 Col. 5

churches. This creates unequal recognition among Dalit groups, spurring ongoing legal-political demands for equitable affirmative action.

Interrogating the constitutional tensions, judicial interpretations, and ongoing legal-scholarly debates.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, precipitates profound constitutional dissonance. Articles 14 (equality), 15 (non-discrimination by religion), 25 (religious freedom), and 17 (abolition of untouchability) ostensibly enshrine secular equity, yet Paragraph 3 conditions affirmative action eligibility on religious identity privileging Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist Dalits while excluding Christian and Muslim counterparts.

Critics contend that religio-caste nexus erodes constitutional secularism, decoupling remedial justice from its avowed rationale: ameliorating lived caste oppression irrespective of faith. Judicial scrutiny has ensued, with Supreme Court petitions and probing the proviso's validity, though without resolution. The Ranganath Misra Commission (2007) advocated delinking SC status from religion, urging empirical assessment of discrimination. Yet, governmental reticence sustains the impasse, perpetuating normative ambiguity and inter-community inequities.

Assessing the material and structural disadvantages imposed on Christian converts from Scheduled Castes

The exclusionary strictures of the 1950 Presidential Order have wrought profound, perduring socioeconomic disenfranchisement upon Dalit Christian communities. While conversion to Christianity offered eschatological solace and ecclesial fraternity, it precipitated the forfeiture of Scheduled Caste (SC) entitlements, relegating converts to Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories that confer quotas attenuated relative to SC reservations in education and public-sector employment.

Empirical corollaries abound: Dalit Christian aspirants confront truncated access to premier higher-education seats, civil-service sinecures, and ancillary emoluments like merit-cum-means scholarships, tuition waivers, and bespoke welfare disbursements. Politically, the absence of delimited SC constituencies mutes their parliamentary advocacy, perpetuating representational penury. Thus ensconced in economic precarity and social abjection, Dalit Christian cohorts evince stark disparities in literacy, occupational mobility, and asset ownership relative to their Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist Dalit counterparts, a structural iniquity emblematic of the Order's discriminatory imprimatur. Dalit Christians endure persistent caste discrimination socially, yet face legal exclusion from Scheduled Caste status, exacerbating their identity crisis.

Exploring identity politics, recognition struggles, and normative pathways toward equitable inclusion

The 1950 Presidential Order transcends juridico-economic ramifications, impinging profoundly on Dalit Christian identitarian ontology. Conversion to Christianity bespoke resistive praxis against caste hegemony and an existential quest for dignitarian emancipation. Yet, SC status denial engenders double alienation: from the constitutional compact and, frequently, from ecclesial politics reticent to interrogate caste entrenchment within their liturgical and hierarchical precincts.

This imbroglio is quintessentially existential, pivoting on recognition hegemonic acknowledgment by the state as heirs to historic subjugation warranting remediation, and societal affirmation as coequals. The Order's perduring exclusion interrogates the caste-religion imbrication in India, exhorting a moral recalibration of constitutional justice.

Reappraising the Order transcends policy tinkering; it mandates harmonizing praxis with constitutional morality. Affirmative action, decoupled from confessional litmus and moored to experiential oppression, alone can redeem equality's pledge for Dalit Christians and cognate subalterns. ●

Young People's Column

The 1950 Presidential Order: Origins, Religious Restriction, and the Continuing Crisis of Dalit Christian Exclusion.

Vamsi Kancharla

Examining the origins and drafting history of the 1950 Scheduled Castes Order within India's post-independence constitutional framework.

The religious qualification later extended to Sikhs (1956) and Buddhists (1990), but not to Christians or Muslims, precipitated enduring juridical, ethical, and policy contestations, raising profound questions about secularism, caste persistence post-conversion, and the Constitution's equality ethos.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, commonly known as the Presidential Order,was issued on 10 August 1950 pursuant to Article 341(1) of the Indian Constitution. This provision vests the President, acting on the advice of the Government of India, with the authority to notify specific castes, races, or tribes as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) for the purposes of affirmative action, safeguards. These include reservations in educational institutions, public employment, legislative seats, and a spectrum of welfare schemes, all aimed at redressing entrenched disabilities arising from untouchability and caste-based discrimination.

The normative impetus for Article 341 lay in a commitment to substantive equality and social justice, as articulated during the Constituent Assembly debates. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and other framers emphasized remedial measures to counteract centuries of ritual exclusion, economic exploitation, and social dehumanization inflicted on the most marginalized communities. Yet, Paragraph 3 of the Order imposed a pivotal proviso, eligibility for SC status was confined to "persons who profess the Hindu religion,'' thereby excluding converts to Christianity, Islam, orother faiths. This religious qualification later extended to Sikhs (1956) and Buddhists (1990), but not to Christians or Muslims. It precipitated enduring juridical, ethical, and policy contestations, raising profound questions about secularism, caste persistence post-conversion, and the Constitution's equality ethos.

Rev. Vamsi Kancharla is pursuing his M.T.h Studies "In History of Christianity at ARRC (Advanced institute for Research on Religion and Culture), Hyderabad. He belongs to Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Tracing the formulation, rationale, and subsequent amendments to the faith-based exclusionary provision

Paragraph 3 of the 1950 Presidential Order indelibly tethered Scheduled Caste (SC) status to religious identity, stipulating that only persons who profess the Hindu religion would qualify for its attendant safeguards. This formulation rested on a foundational and sociologically contestable premise: that caste-based discrimination was an intrinsic artifact of Hindu social structure, ipso facto eradicated upon conversion to a non-Hindu faith. **Such an assumption overlooked empirical evidence of caste's perdurance as a trans-religious social institution, perpetuated through endogamy, occupational segregation, and customary prejudice beyond theological boundaries.**

The provision's evolution reflects incremental, albeit selective, liberalization. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Amendment Order, 1956 (notified 23 January 1956), extended SC eligibility to Sikh converts from Hindu SCs, predicated on judicial findings, affirming caste continuity within Sikh communities. A parallel amendment via the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order Amendment Act, 1990 (effective 14 February 1990), incorporated Buddhists, acknowledging analogous social disabilities post-conversion. Notably absent, however, were parallel inclusions for Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims, despite parliamentary deliberations (e.g., 1952 Constituent Assembly debates and the 2004-2008 National Commission for Religious and Linguistic Minorities report) documenting persistent caste opprobrium in these groups.

Government rationalizes excluding Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims by deeming their faiths inherently casteless. Yet, ethnographic evidence reveals persistent caste discrimination in housing, marriage, jobs, and

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The Language of Vengeance: A Comparison between Samson's Oath in Judges 15:7 and Modern War Rhetoric of Donald Trump

G. Santhosh

The Biblical Scripture invites individuals and leaders alike to seek wisdom, restraint, and peace instead of allowing vengeance to control their actions. Such Biblical reflections encourage readers to think carefully about the power of words in times of crisis and the importance of choosing responses that promote justice and reconciliation rather than destruction.

The theme of vengeance appears frequently in both ancient history and modern political conflicts. A meaningful comparison can be drawn between the statement of Samson in Book of Judges 15:7 -"I swear I will not stop until I have taken revenge on you"- and the strong wartime declarations made by the US President Donald Trump during the conflict between the United States and Iran in 2026. Although separated by thousands of years and very different contexts, both statements reflect how the language of vengeance can influence conflict, increase tension, and shape human responses to perceived injustice.

In Judges 15:7, Samson's declaration comes after a deeply personal experience of betrayal and violence involving the Philistines. His wife had been given to another man, and his actions against the Philistines led to further retaliation from them. In response to these events, Samson vowed not to rest until he had taken revenge. His statement reflects the emotional intensity of personal anger and wounded honour. In the cultural setting of the Old Testament period, such responses were often seen as part of the cycle of tribal justice and survival. Samson's revenge was not merely personal; it also reflected the larger struggle between Israel and the Philistines during the time when Israel lacked centralized leadership.

However, Samson's words also reveal the dangerous nature of revenge. Instead of resolving conflict, his actions led to further violence and suffering on both sides. The narratives of Judges repeatedly show how cycles of sin, oppression, revenge, and deliverance shaped Israel's history. Samson's statement is therefore not presented as a moral command to imitate but as a realistic description of human behavior in a time of instability and conflict. His life demonstrates both God's use of imperfect individuals and the consequences of uncontrolled anger.

In comparison, the declarations made by Donald Trump during the 2026 conflict with Iran also reflect strong language intended to respond to perceived threats and opposition. As a political leader speaking during wartime, his warnings about destroying infrastructure and taking decisive action, were part of a strategy designed to pressure an opposing nation. **Unlike Samson's personal revenge, however, these statements were made within the framework of international politics, national security concerns, and military strategy. The scale of impact is, therefore, much larger. Modern political rhetoric has the power to influence entire nations, affect civilian populations, and shape global stability.**

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Another important metamorphosis between Samson's statement and modern wartime declarations lies in responsibility. Samson acted largely as an individual judge responding to local conflict in ancient Israel. In contrast, a modern head of state represents an entire nation and must consider diplomatic consequences, international law, and humanitarian concerns. Words spoken by national leaders can escalate tensions quickly and influence the direction of global events. Therefore, the ethical weight of such declarations is significantly greater.

At the same time, there is a clear similarity between the two situations. Both reveal how the language of vengeance can intensify conflict rather than resolve it. When leaders or individuals speak from a position of anger or retaliation, the possibility of reconciliation becomes more difficult. **The story of Samson illustrates how revenge creates a continuing cycle of violence. Modern conflicts often demonstrate the same pattern, where threats lead to counter-threats and actions lead to further escalation.**

From a theological perspective, the Bible gradually moves readers beyond the cycle of revenge seen in the Book of Judges toward a higher vision of justice and reconciliation. This development reaches its clearest expression in the teachings of Jesus Christ, who emphasized forgiveness, love for enemies, and trust in God's justice rather than personal retaliation. While the Old Testament records many examples of human anger and vengeance, the broader biblical message calls believers to pursue peace wherever possible.

Therefore, the comparison between Samson's oath in Judges 15:7 and modern wartime rhetoric helps us understand the continuing relevance of biblical narratives for interpreting contemporary events. Both situations remind us that revenge-driven language can deepen conflict and increase suffering. At the same time, Scripture invites individuals and leaders alike to seek wisdom, restraint, and peace instead of allowing vengeance to control their actions. Such reflection encourages readers to think carefully about the power of words in times of crisis and the importance of choosing responses that promote justice and reconciliation rather than destruction.

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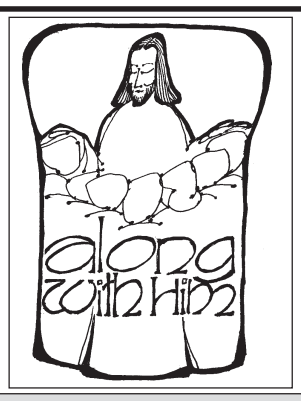

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Mammen Varkey

"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you". When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the father has sent me, even so I send you". And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." John 20:19-23 (RSV)

Easter Reflections - 3

The Path of the Cross will Lead to Resurrection - 3

The Risen Master sends his disciples along the path of the Cross

The Risen Master showed 'his hands and his side' to his disciples who had locked themselves inside a room, most importantly, as we shared in the last reflection, for calling them back to the way of the cross. They all had forsaken, and fled from, the Master when he had been caught. "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled". Matt. 26:56. In fact, Peter had denied his Master thrice. "And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times'. And he went out and wept bitterly" Matt. 26:78. The marks on the hands and the side of their Risen Master were ample evidence to prove to the disciples that the Parent God well approved and blessed their Master's way, the way of the cross.

Not the first time

It was not the first time that Jesus called his disciples to the way of the cross. When he was alive he had very clearly said to those who really wanted to follow him that there was no other way than that of the cross. "And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it". Mark. 8:35. **Now, the Risen Master undeniably proved to them that the way of the cross would lead to Resurrection and eternal life.**

The way for the establishment of the 'kingdom of God' is the way of the Cross

Having effectively conveyed to the disciples gathered in the room, that the parent God was well pleased with the way that their Master chose for carrying out the mission that had been entrusted with him, **that is, the establishment of the kingdom of God, the rule of God, Jesus said to them, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you". John 20:21.** What is critically important here is to understand that Jesus was declaring one truth. **Jesus was unequivocally declaring that the Parent God had sent him to journey along the way of the cross.** At least at one point Jesus himself had prayed "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Matt. 26:39. Though he prayed three times in Gethsemane to take him out, if possible, from the way of the cross, he became conscious that it was the way chosen by the Parent God in His mission of the establishment of His rule. And Jesus fully, totally, submitted himself to the Parent's will. **Now, the disciples understood that their Risen Master was sending them out also along the way of the cross. Not along the path of power or of wealth or of miracles. Because what the Risen Master told them was, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you". John 20:21.** What Jesus had prayed in Gethsemane was, "….. Father, nevertheless not as I will but as Thou will." Matt. 26:39 (RSV). So what happened was according to the will of God. In other words, the Father sent Jesus along the path of the cross. By saying, 'As the father has sent me, even so I send you", Jesus was telling his disciples that he was also sending them out along the way of the cross.

Did the disciples listen to the Risen Master's words?

Now the crucial question is whether the disciples listened to the call of their Risen Master and committed themselves to journey along the path of the cross, in the establishment of the 'kingdom of God'? Before we enter into a reflection on that point, we have to look at the response of one of the twelve, as narrated by John.

To be continued

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

Grow In Christ's Wisdom

A. V. Itty

2 Pet. 3: 14-18

"Continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (v.18).

Most of the Christians have only very limited knowledge about God. It is because they are not interested to study and understand who God is, in the light of the Holy Scripture and the experiences of their own lives.

The exhortation of St. Peter in the Scripture portion we meditate upon, is the remedy for this. He exhorts the believers: To grow in the grace (of God) and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (v.18).

St. Paul tells the believers in Ephesus: "I remember you in my prayers and ask God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him. I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, and how very great is his power at work in us who believe" (Eph. 1:17,18).

God is keen to make every believer similar to Christ's image. For that, we need to grow to the very height of Christ's full stature, by drinking the unadulterated milk called the word of God and talking the truth in a spirit of love (Eph. 4:15).

Systematic and regular study of the word of God is essential for it. But that is not happening. It seems that the criticism of Leonardo Boff that Jesus Christ came preaching the Kingdom of God , but many preachers today go around preaching a Jesus who is alienated from the Kingdom of God, is becoming true. Let it not happen in our lives and let us keep ourselves away from that.

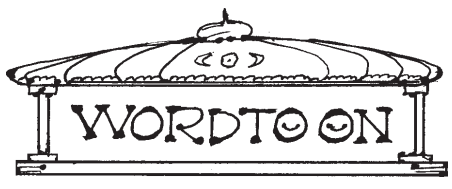
Prof. A. V. Itty, former Professor of English at Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara, is, now, engaged in the Evangelical, and Educational Ministry undertaken by ADORE in the Rayagada Dist. of Odisha. 94950 17850 (Mob)

May we be able to grow in Christ's wisdom.

May God help us

Food For Thought:

We cannot become mature Christians without growing in Christ's wisdom!



When you DO GOOD, GOD is in it

Christian Conference of Asia
an organ and fellowship of churches and ecumenical councils in asia for initiating and facilitating dynamic christian witness and action

Asian youth commit to "break every yoke" and rise as agents of transformation

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participants declared that God stands with the oppressed and continues to act in history to bring freedom and justice. They underscored that Christian faith cannot remain private, but must engage in transforming unjust systems and restoring human dignity.

Communique
'Break Every Yoke and Build the Future'

"We, more than 200 young Christian youth from Asia and beyond, gathered at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 17 to 21 April 2026 for the Fifth Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA), organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). Coming from diverse nations, cultures, church traditions and confessional families across the region, we met amid unprecedented global crises, whose impact is now more evident in Asia. We gathered here as one body in Christ—united in our faith, enriched by diversity, and bound by a shared longing for peace with justice and dignity".

(Full text of the Communique will be published in the next issue)

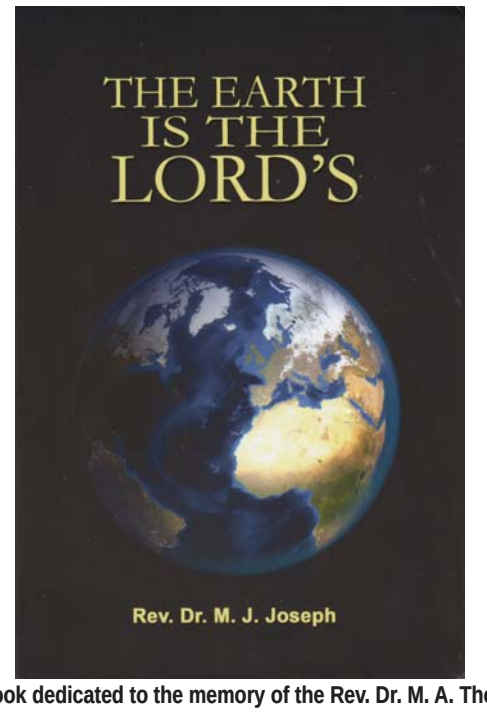
Participants in the AEYA 2026

The communiqué listed a wide range of interconnected "yokes" affecting the realities of young people today, including mental health struggles and social isolation, economic inequality and unemployment, forced migration and human trafficking, political repression and shrinking civic space, as well as violence, ecological crises, and the growing influence of digital systems that shape perception and limit critical awareness.

The communiqué also reflected participants' pledge to stand in solidarity with marginalised groups, to uphold ecological responsibility, to engage ethically in digital spaces, and to practice integrity in leadership and daily life. Peace building, interfaith dialogue, and collaboration across cultures were highlighted as essential pathways towards healing and reconciliation.

Calling for shared responsibility, the communiqué urged churches and ecumenical bodies to move beyond token inclusion of youth by sharing leadership and decision-making power, while equipping young people with theological depth and practical tools. Young people themselves were challenged to reject apathy, step beyond their comfort zones, and actively shape a more just and compassionate future.

– CCA News



A book dedicated to the memory of the Rev. Dr. M. A. Thomas, the Founder Director of the Ecumenical Christian Centre (ECC) and to the promotion of the ecological concerns of the ECC.

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Please see page 5

cheerchat

'Love and compassion are necessities, not, luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive'

– Dalai Lama

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

Build momentum for a "just transition" from fossil fuels

The Santa Marta gathering was the first implementation-focused conference, intended to support those prepared to take practical action to implement a just, orderly and equitable transition away from fossil fuels. Its outcomes are expected to contribute to the next United Nations Climate Conference, COP31.

The LWF co-organized the "Meeting of Spiritualities for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels" on 24 April, in Santa Marta, Colombia. This ecumenical and interfaith gathering was held in the context of the first Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels, convened by the governments of Colombia and the Netherlands for key stakeholders.

As momentum builds on a timeline to transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) joined faith communities discussing key issues of the global **climate emergency**, including the ethical dimensions of a just transition.

During the event, Golda Ibarra, the LWF representative for Colombia and Venezuela, presented the key pillars of a just transition from a faith-based perspective. These were based on the recommendations set out in the policy **Just Transition & Human Rights – Views of Faith Based Communities**, which emphasizes the importance of justice, dignity, and inclusion in shaping the transition process.

Elena Cedillo, LWF Program Executive for Climate Justice, reflected on the meaning of a just transition: "Faith communities emphasize the need for a just transformation that places the dignity of people and the wellbeing of our common home at the center, ensuring that those most affected are protected and empowered to lead the transition toward a fossil fuel-free future. For the LWF, it is about guaranteeing that decisions at the global level protect the most vulnerable communities and include them in shaping solutions," she said.

One of the sessions at the "Meeting of Spiritualities for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels" held in Santa Marta, Colombia. *Photo: Milton Mejía*

Faith communities emphasize the need for a just transformation that places the dignity of people and the wellbeing of our common home at the center

Rev. Milton Mejía from the Presbyterian Church of Colombia said the meeting underlined a shared message of hope. "From our Christian faith, we are convinced that the gospel calls us to protect life in all of creation. It is urgent to safeguard life under threat."

Promoting cooperation was part of the meeting's agenda. Nathaly Quito, climate justice coordinator of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia said, "This space makes it possible to exchange experiences, build proposals, and advance just energy transitions rooted in local realities."

– LWF/P, Mumia

People's Reporter
A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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